

The Chicago Opera Co's Newest Squabbles and Scandals

The Grand Opera Prima Donnas Start the Season with a Rather Livelier Programme of Law Suits, Jealousies and Recriminations Than Usual



Mlle. Muzio, the Soprano, Is Shocked to Hear That the Wife of Her Manager, Mrs. Scotto Threatens to Sue Her for Alienation of Her Husband Affections.

MRS. Ottavio Scotto, wife of the impresario of the Chicago Opera Co., is reported to have threatened suit against Mlle. Muzio, the Chicago Soprano, for alienating the affections of Ottavio Scotto, the Chicago Impresario.

That paragraph sounds like some sort of a joke—but it isn't. It is just one of the various rows, intrigues, jealousies and troubles which, as usual, mark the opening of the season of the famous Chicago Grand Opera Company which has now changed its name to the Chicago Civic Opera Co.

The season has scarcely begun and yet a rather more full and varied collection of squabbles and discords among the opera stars have been recorded this year than ever before.

The little paragraph about Mlle. Muzio and the suit by Mme. Ottavio Scotto is not the first nor the most important of the new Fall crop of scandals and rows.

Mme. Scotto is said to place the sum of \$125,000 as a fair valuation on the loss of the affections of her husband Ottavio Scotto. And she would like Mlle. Claudia Muzio, the Chicago Opera Company soprano, to pay her that amount.

Mme. Johanna Galski, another soprano star, has sued the Opera Company for \$500,000 because of something or other about her husband's loyalty to the Kaiser having counted against her in the company.

And Nina Morgana modestly fixed the sum of \$5,000 in her suit against the Opera Company for using a picture of her charming features on one of the programmes without her permission and after she had quit the company.

But if the big opera stars on the stage can have their rows and lawsuits, so can the more humble players in the orchestra. Thus it was that Senor Fabiani, first violinist, brought suit against the Opera Company for \$100,000 because he was discharged from the orchestra with what he considers a badly damaged reputation.

And the other day when the news came across the ocean that Mme. Ganna Walska, former star of the Chicago Opera Company, was going to try a concert tour in America under the management of the well-known impresario Jules Daiber, Mme. Luella Melus, the opera star, arose and announced that she would sue to it that no such tour was made by Ganna because she, Mme. Melus herself, had an exclusive contract for Daiber's services and she would go to the court and prove it.

The great tenor, Muratore, is not singing with the Chicago company this season, and there lies a tale of jealousy and intrigue, according to the gossip behind the scenes.

Joseph Schwarz, leading baritone, recently married to a rich wife, suddenly quit the other day after a row with Business Manager Shaw because he turned up a few days late.

"Even to sing in Chicago," said the baritone as he packed up his costumes, "I would not cut short my honeymoon with the queenliest woman in the whole wide world."

But the story of the spectacular debut of John Marshall, the tenor, and how it forced a complete upsetting of the plans and opera programme of the season—well, that would fill a page all by itself.

And just as this goes to press Miss Grace Holst, the Norwegian soprano, burst into tears and reported that she was one of the many Chicago stars who

had received blackmail threats that unless she hired a "claque" of twenty persons to occupy a section of the balcony on the night of her debut and provide plentiful paid-for-in-advance applause, her performance would be seriously "endangered."

Even Mary Garden herself is said to be in a state of mind because Mme. Bourskaya has been given several of Mary's best roles. The extraordinary assertion is made that Mary Garden was not present on the opening night of the opera this season when the new star sang one of her favorite roles.

But, go back again to the unpleasant notoriety mentioned in the first paragraph of this article.

The trouble arose after Ottavio Scotto, the impresario of the Chicago Opera Company, fell in love with the voice of beautiful Claudia Muzio, and took it away with him to Chicago.

He followed that voice, first to South America, and then to Europe, and landed with it in New York the other day, when it was announced that his wife, Carmelina, had signed papers in a \$125,000 alienation suit against Muzio, and also was to bring a suit for separation against him.

Claudia Muzio was brought up on the operatic stage. Under the careful tutelage of Italian voice instructors, she learned that the bird in her throat was a high-noted thrush.

About the time that she was developing the glorious soprano arias in "Aida," "Tosca" and "Nedda," Scotto was struggling to make a living in this country as a boarding-house keeper. He had married a woman in his native Italy, and after the first child, now a beautiful girl of fifteen, was born, decided to trust his fortunes in America.

Fortune's visage was grim. For a long time he struggled hard to make both ends meet. The family increased, and Mrs. Scotto decided that the only way to get along was to ply her own nimble fingers making beautiful embroideries, taught by her grandmother. She opened a little store and soon had a fashionable clientele, who thought highly of her craftsmanship, but refused to pay very much for it.

Then Scotto graduated from the boarding-house into the real estate business, from which he afterward escaped into the musical field.

Here at last was the turn in fortune for which he had been waiting. A prosperous agency soon developed through his efforts, and in time he began to number among his clients some prominent musicians.



Ottavio Scotto, Who Mrs. Scotto Says Has Deserted Her and the Children for Mlle. Muzio, the Pretty Young Soprano.

Ottavio Scotto, Who Mrs. Scotto Says Has Deserted Her and the Children for Mlle. Muzio, the Pretty Young Soprano.



The New Soprano Star, Mme. Bourskaya, Who is Said to Have Been Given Some of Mary Garden's Pet Roles.

The New Soprano Star, Mme. Bourskaya, Who is Said to Have Been Given Some of Mary Garden's Pet Roles.

Two years ago the people of Buenos Aires offered Mlle. Muzio a substantial contract, which, at the advice of friends, she decided to accept. Here was Scotto's opportunity. With her he took the trip to South America as agent, and since then has been her constant companion in that capacity and has travelled around Europe in her company, reviewing the scenes of her early triumphs.

Mrs. Scotto does not like the business arrangement her husband made with Muzio, and says of it:

"I do not want him to have anything to do with Muzio. Before he knew Muzio he was a good husband and a good father, but since he has known her we have practically passed out of his life."

Mlle. Muzio is somewhat bewildered by the notoriety that has come to her. She denies that she is the cause of the trouble between Mr. Scotto and his wife, and protests her own sorrow for Mrs. Scotto.

When he received this letter he claims he

Mary Garden in a State of Mind Because Mme. Bourskaya Has Been Given Some of Her Own Best Roles; Mme. Melus and Ganna Walska in Conflict Over Their Contract with a Manager; Mrs. Scotto Bids Scotto to Come Back to Her and Abandon His Tour with Mlle. Muzio, the

Soprano; Nina Morgana Sues the Opera Company for Displaying Her Picture and Her Name on the Programme; Muratore Storms Off the Stage with His Wife, Lina Cavalieri; Senor Fabiani Discharged from the Orchestra and Brings Suit; Mme. Galski Wants \$500,000 Because of Something or Other, and Grace Holst Complains That the "Opera Claque" Is Trying to Blackmail Her.

stopped payment of the check, but later some unidentified person tried to cash it at the bank on which it was drawn.

Mr. Shaw comes right back at Maestro Fabiani's lawyer in a pretty little newspaper duel in which he makes public a letter received, so he claims, from this same Miss Elwell, reading:

"Last Fall Mr. Fabiani, while representing himself as a concert manager, offered for a sum of \$6,000 to secure me a contract with the Chicago Opera Company, owing to his friendship with Mr. Polacco.

"I afterward found out that he played the violin in the Chicago Opera orchestra, and whether or not my trying to get this contract without his assistance had been an influence working against my interest I am at a loss to know."

To back up this letter Mr. Shaw also made public another which he said he had received from Miss Elwell's former accompanist, in which the soprano said she had been "advised by friends to expose Fabiani."

Mrs. Eleanor Fisher, Miss Elwell's manager, a niece of the late Colonel Henry Watterson, has also taken a hand in the row and a merry court battle is promised.

Whether or not Mary Garden appeared at the opening of the opera season, as has always been her custom, has been a source of much speculation. The temperamental prima donna's personal representative says that she had rehearsed "Carmen" for five hours in the afternoon and undoubtedly was too tired.

The gossip around the opera house is that the former "directa" is very much put out because the Russian star, Mme. Bourskaya, will sing "Carmen."

Miss Garden sang the role of the mellifluous cigarette maker twice before she went on her recent tour, and practised for the part, but music critics are unanimous in the belief that Bourskaya's "Carmen" will be one of the big hits of the season.

The great tenor, Muratore is not among the company's stars this season. The capriciousness of Mary Garden in not using the voice of his wife, Lina Cavalieri, is blamed for the coolness that existed between Muratore and "Our Mary" all last year and which eventually pried the services of this sterling tenor from the Chicago Opera Company's stage. The story goes that in order to get Muratore it was necessary also to sign a contract for his wife.

Although Cavalieri was apparently en-

gaged to sing many roles other singers were placed in her parts. Professional jealousy soon developed, and the long-suffering Cavalieri, so it is said, saw the day when an exquisite choice of expletives passed between Mary and her husband, and he decided he would never again sing another year in a company over which Mary presided.

One day Mary was said to be nice, and the next day so sour that it jarred on the nerves of the temperamental tenor, who merely shrugged his shoulders and turned his hands in an expressive gesture when reminded that his beautiful wife was being carried on the payrolls of the opera company, and was deeply disappointed that she didn't have the opportunity she wanted to display the quality of her voice.

Nina Morgana thinks that it is worth \$5,000 for the Chicago Opera Company to advertise her voice after her contract had expired.

The youthful prima donna demanded this amount of money in court when she alleged that the company had used her pictures on programmes and billboards long after she had severed her connections with it.

It is not only disconcerting but may prove very costly not to use a high-priced voice because it bears a foreign trademark. Mme. Johanna Galski filed a suit for \$500,000 for breach of contract and defamation, charging that the Chicago Opera Company management plotted to injure her not only in the musical world but in society.

Through counsel, Mme. Galski charged that the opera company had set up the claim that the public would refuse to hear the great Wagnerian soprano sing because she was the wife of Hans Tauscher, a native subject of Germany. Mme. Galski declared that during the war her husband had lived in Germany and spent his time alleviating the condition of American prisoners of war.

She contended that the opera company paid her \$7,500 rather than permit her to sing from the stage because of her husband's war status.

Speaking of her troubles, the famous prima donna, deprived of making the twenty-fifth anniversary of her debut in this country at the time she hoped, protested: "It was with the greatest reluctance that I finally yielded to the pressure of advisers and friends to protect my career, my family and my good name from continued libel by bringing action which will place responsibility where it belongs for those who slander and make infamous statements which injure my position in the social and artistic world."

"After my success in concerts in New York, St. Louis and Washington, which made me so happy, the wonderful ovations of the audiences seemed a glad cry of welcome home. I know that the attitude of the Chicago Opera Company could not have been a matter of vocal or dramatic merit, but based on cruel falsehoods."

Perhaps the reason for all this discord among singers may be found in the philosophical deductions of Mlle. Muzio, who gave as her opinion that:

"An operatic life is just one jealousy after another."

The Chicago Grand Opera season has just begun—what other entertaining behind-the-scenes squabbles will develop no one can foretell.

3